

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EINV, BBAK, IT
SUBJ: TORRINGTON DEVELOPMENTS

REF: GENOA 0106 AND PREVIOUS

1. PUBLIC INTEREST HAS BEEN REKINDLED IN THE TORRINGTON CASE BY THE US COMPANY'S CRIMINAL SUIT, NAMING GENOA'S MAYOR, TWO GEPI OFFICIALS, AND 20 WORKERS AS DEFENDANTS FOR THE OCCUPATION OF THE PLANT AND BY THE OPENING OF ARGUMENTS IN THE CIVIL COURT. THE PROVINCIAL CGIL-CISL-UIL LABOR FEDERATIONS SPONSORED AN OPEN ASSEMBLY ON MARCH 21, WHICH ATTRACTED A NUMBER OF LEFTIST OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THE SELF-STYLED REPRESENTATIVE OF A CHILEAN EXILE GROUP, TO BOOST THE LAGGING SPIRITS OF TORRINGTON'S FORMER 385 WORKERS WHO HAVE BEEN OCCUPYING THE PLANT SINCE NOVEMBER 1975 AND HAVE NOT BEEN PAID SINCE SETTE GERI (AN IPO-GEPI STATE-OWNED ENTITY) ABSORBED THEM ON OCTOBER 1.

2. ACCORDING TO PUBLISHED ACCOUNTS OF THE RALLY, THE SPEAKERS WERE EVEN-HANDED IN THEIR CRITICISM, CASTIGATING BOTH TORRINGTON AND GEPI. GENOA'S MAYOR, A DEFENDANT IN THE CRIMINAL CASE, VIEWED TORRINGTON'S LATEST LEGAL MOVE AS "PROVOCATORY" AND LIKELY TO
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PRODUCE EFFECTS OPPOSITE TO THOSE DESIRED. GEPI WAS ROUNDLY CRITICIZED FOR FAILURE TO HAVE A CONCRETE SOLUTION FOR THE REVIVAL OF PRODUCTION AT TORRINGTON.

3. IN THE MIDST OF THE LEGAL AND UNION MANEUVERINGS, THE PRESS HINTED THAT GEPI WAS NEAR TO FINDING A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM. REPORTEDLY, GEPI WOULD PURCHASE TORRINGTON'S PLANT FACILITIES,

EXCLUDING OF THE SPECIALIZED MACHINERY, AND OFFER SPECIAL ENTICEMENTS TO AN UNIDENTIFIED FIRM TO RESUME NEEDLE PRODUCTION USING ITS OWN MACHINERY AND TECHNOLOGY. THESE ENTICEMENTS WOULD INCLUDE THE USE OF LOW INTEREST LOANS RECENTLY AUTHORIZED BY CIPE (THE INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY) TO COMPANIES INTERESTED IN PURCHASING IPO-GEPI PROPERTIES. AN UNIDENTIFIED FRENCH FIRM, EXPERIENCED IN THE MANUFACTURE OF NEEDLES FOR THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY, AND THE CZECH COMPANY, IGLA, ARE SAID TO BE BOTH INTERESTED IN THIS ARRANGEMENT, WITH THE FRENCH COMPANY'S BID RATED THE MOST SERIOUS. A TORRINGTON SOURCE IS SKEPTICAL OF THESE STORIES AND TOLD US THAT GEPI HAS NEVER FORMALLY RESPONDED TO TORRINGTON'S OFFER OF LAST FALL TO SELL ITS PLANT AND NON-SPECIALIZED MACHINERY FOR 2 BILLION LIRE.

COMMENT: THE UNIONS ARE GROWING TIRED OF GEPI'S FOOTDRAGGING IN FINDING ALTERNATE WORK FOR TORRINGTON'S WORK FORCE AND PLAN TO INTENSIFY THEIR PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT. THEY PROBABLY FEAR THAT THE CIVIL COURT WILL UPHOLD THE ORDER TO VACATE THE FACTORY AND THUS TAKE AWAY THEIR SYMBOL OF PROTEST. WITHOUT AN OCCUPIED FACTORY AND ESPECIALLY WITHOUT THE MACHINERY, THE WORKERS MAY BELIEVE THAT GOVERNMENT WILL LOSE INTEREST IN THEIR PLIGHT. DESPITE THEIR RHETORIC, THE UNIONS NOW APPEAR AMENDABLE TO PERMITTING TORRINGTON TO WITHDRAW ITS MACHINERY PROVIDED THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT FINDS ALTERNATE EMPLOYMENT FOR THE FORMER TORRINGTON WORKERS. WITH JOB PROSPECTS LIMITED IN THE GENOA AREA, THE TORRINGTON WORKERS, WHOSE EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS STOPPED LAST OCTOBER, MAY BE WILLING TO SETTLE FOR A JOB RATHER THAN UPHOLD QUESTIONABLE PRINCIPLES. IN A BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH THE CONSUL GENERAL ON MARCH 25, GENOA MAYOR CEROFOLINI, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHO HAS REMARRIED RECENTLY, WISTFULLY SPECULATED THAT TORRINGTON'S CRIMINAL SUIT AGAINST HIM WAS DESIGNED TO PRESSURE THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT INTO A SPEEDY RESOLUTION OF THE CONTROVERSY. DI SCIULLO

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